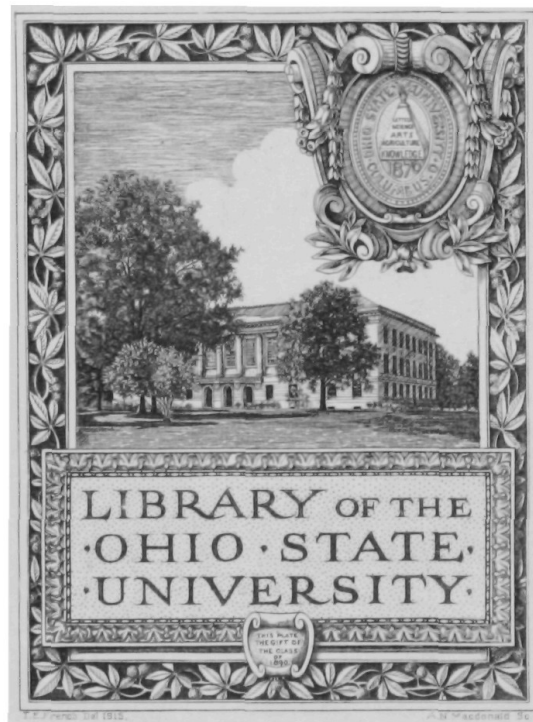




THE PORTRAITS OF GEOFFREY CHAUCER.

THIS Paper was published simultaneously in the 'Magazine of Art' (July, August, and September, 1900), and in the volume of 'Chaucer Lectures' issued by the Royal Society of Literature in celebration of the quincentenary of the poet's death. Fifty copies were then reprinted separately, with a few minor but necessary corrections; and from one of these the present Reprint, with further slight modification, has been made for the Second Series of the Chaucer Society's publications.

M. H. S.

December 1900.

THE PORTRAITS OF
GEOFFREY CHAUCER.

AN ESSAY WRITTEN ON THE OCCASION OF THE
QUINCENTENARY OF THE POET'S DEATH.

BY
M. H. SPIELMANN.

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Second Series. 31.

RICHARD CLAY & SONS, LIMITED, LONDON & BUNGAY.

THE PORTRAITS OF GEOFFREY CHAUCER.

WHEN Chaucer lived—and Hafiz of Persia was the setting sun that heralded the decadence of Eastern poetry—the renaissance of the Arts in the West was engaging the attention and inflaming the enthusiasm of Occidental Europe. Petrarch, Boccaccio, and Froissart were all working abroad; Langland was entertaining the English world with his “Vision of Piers Plowman,” and Sir John Mandeville with his “Travels in the East;” and John Gower, Wycliffe, and Lydgate made their appeal variously to the mind and conscience of the thinking public. The great schism in the Church took place—there were rival Popes at Rome and Avignon, and the papal tribute had been discontinued: Urban VI was acknowledged by England, Germany, Italy, Hungary, Portugal, and the North; while Clement VII was revered by France, Spain, and Naples. The power of the Medici family rose and triumphed in Tuscany before Genoa was humbled by Venice; and University Colleges were founded in rapid succession—Cracow, Heidelberg, and Prague before Chaucer’s birth, and during his lifetime Pavia (Vienna), Winchester, Pesth, Cologne, Erfurt, Ferrara, Angers, and Turin. Gunpowder was invented, the Order of the Garter was instituted, and—the vine was planted in Tokay. Intellectual movement was wide-spread, consequent on strife of opinion or as the result of scientific, philosophic, or artistic research; and, above all, the world was rapidly becoming pregnant with the crowning art of printing.

The plastic and the graphic arts, and the arts of design, were included in the general activity. Yet Giotto, the father of modern portrait-painting from the life, and the friend of Dante and Petrarch, had died in 1336, and had left no obvious successor: for Masaccio was not born till two years after Chaucer’s death. The Academy of Saint Luke had been founded in Florence in 1350; and Melchior Broederlam of Ipres, the official painter of Philip, Duke of Burgundy, was preparing the way for the improvements in painting that were introduced by the brothers

Van Eyck. In England, however, accurate portrait rendering was not widely appreciated; the true *statuæ iconicæ*—or, as Suetonius called them, *simulacra iconica*—were rarely asked for, and, it may be conceived, were still more rarely produced.

Of portraiture of the time of Chaucer we have in England a fairly numerous collection, beginning with the large distemper representation of Richard II in the Sacristy at Westminster; but even though the supposititious sitters are known—or probably merely guessed at—it is impossible to assert that their portraits were drawn from the life, even from statues, tombs, brasses, or church windows. In extremely few cases can the name of the painter be ventured upon, with such rare exceptions as “Luca Cornelli’s” portrait of John of Gaunt, Duke of Lancaster, now (or lately) in the possession of the Duke of Beaufort. In such circumstances it is obvious that without laboured proof of the contrary even the earliest portraits of Chaucer would be open to the suspicion of not being painted from the life; inasmuch as the handling, skilful as it is up to a certain point, is usually rough, and the pictures executed in crude masses or touches of colour, or with coarse markings in place of the careful modelling and intelligent effort at characterisation which are commonly to be found in the least capable portraits taken from the living model. There is, perhaps, just the bare possibility that, apart from the Occleve (or Hoccleve) illumination, one of the portraits I am about to mention—the Seddon, or Fairfax Murray portrait—may have been executed by a limner who had seen Chaucer in the flesh, though I do not think so. Although nearly every student of Chaucer and of the history of art would reject the supposition, this view has been supported by at least one distinguished painter; but it is, of course, impossible to do more than speculate upon the point. The Occleve portrait, it must be remembered, is admittedly a memory painting, being, however, the only one which is universally accepted as trustworthy.

Although our knowledge of Chaucer and his life is derived mainly from sources other than the direct references vouchsafed to us by his contemporaries and immediate successors (more profuse, nevertheless, than such as we have of Spenser's life), those pieces of information which are not manifestly erroneous are of extreme value. Occleve has a double claim on our gratitude in virtue of portraits both in pen and pencil,* descriptive and pictorial. His admiration of Chaucer, whom he calls "maister dere and fader reverent," was unbounded; for, like Leonardo da Vinci, the Father of English Poetry was a man of infinite parts, not a poet only, but a soldier and a scientist, as well as valet and esquire of the King's household, frequently entrusted with missions as envoy and ambassador, employed as Clerk of the Works,† and as Comptroller of the Customs, as well as Member of Parliament; and these abilities, reinforcing his exquisite sense of poetry, commanded the hero-worship of his follower.

It will be remembered that Chaucer, in the 'Canterbury Tales,' is said to have described himself as corpulent, with a small face and elvish, with a habit of looking on the ground—"olde and unlusty" at fifty-two. Hallam, in 'The Middle Ages,' expresses the opinion that Chaucer, to whom he allows vivacity of imagination and ease of expression, lacked "grandeur," as if, like Napoleon Bonaparte when he waxed fat, he lost that highest development of intellectual power and alertness which are popularly supposed to be characteristic rather of the ascetic than the obese. But is the description of the poet really a portrait of himself at all? And what incontrovertible reason is there to suppose that the Master of the Ceremonies truly has the author [himself] in view when he banters the rhymester thus?—

"Now ware you, sirs, and let this man have space,
He in the waist is shapen as well as I;
This were a puppet in an arm to embrace
For any woman, small, and fair of face.
He seemeth elvish by his countenance,
For unto no wight doth he dalliance".

By "elvish," Tyrwhitt declares, Chaucer meant "shy and reserved." Yet if we look elsewhere (in the "Prologue of the Chanounes Yeman")

* The pen portrait his own; the pencil one procured by him, possibly from the illuminator or artist who may have been attached to the Privy Seal Office at Westminster in which Hoccleve worked, which was nearly opposite to Chaucer's house on the site of Henry VII's Chapel in the Abbey, and which must have ensured the artist's often seeing Chaucer. Still more likely was the portrait by one of the monks in the Abbey *Scriptorium*.—F. J. F.

† 'Punch' (1843) quaintly refers to this occupation: Chaucer "was made Clerk of the Works at Westminster, a situation now held by one of the men in the employ of Messrs. Grissel and Peto."

the word is used in the commoner sense of "supernatural" or "fairy-like." It may be asked whether the commentator has not been less rigid in respect of Chaucer's language than observant in the matter of his portraits.

I.—The best likeness that is presented to us of Chaucer, then, is the limning, or what we should nowadays call "water-colour drawing," which Occleve introduced into his book 'De Regimine Principum,' 'The Regement of Princes.'* In that part of it entitled "De Consilio habendo in omnibus factis" he has executed, or rather, caused to be executed, a fine marginal painting in colours. This is here reproduced from a photograph taken with the latest improvements, so that the relative tones and values may be set forth on the page in a degree of perfection and completeness never before attained. This painting, it will be seen, appears opposite to the following lines:

"Although his lyfe be queynt the résemblance
Of him bath in me só fressh lyflynesse
That to putte othir men in rémembrance
Of his persón I haue heere his lyknesse
Do make to this ende in sothfastnesse
That thei that haue of him lest thought & mynde
By this peynturē may ageyn him fynde".—'Regement,' 4992-8.

Occleve then proceeds to justify the painting of portraits—the art to which Chaucer himself so frequently refers,—and to refute the opinion held by some "that none ymáges shuld ymaked be," concluding:

"Passe over that now, blessid trinite
Upon my maistres soulē mercy haue
ffor him lady eke thi mercy I craue".—'Regement,' 5010-12.

It is hardly likely that a portrait commissioned and watched-over in this reverent and loving spirit could be otherwise than a likeness, not only as good as the poet could get painted, but good enough, moreover, to satisfy him that—

"Whan a thing depeynt is
Or entailed if men take of it heede
Thought of the lyknesse it wil in hem brede".—'Regement,' 5003-5.

Concerning this portrait Sir Harris Nicolas says:†

"The affection of Occleve has made Chaucer's person better known than that of any individual of his age. The portrait . . . is taken from Occleve's painting already mentioned in the Harleian MS. 4866, which he says was painted from memory after Chaucer's decease, and which is

* Edited by the late Thomas Wright from the Royal MS. 17 D vi, for the Roxburghe Club in 1860, and by Dr. F. J. Furnivall from the Harleian MS. 4866 for the Early English Text Society in 1897.

† See the Aldine Edition of Chaucer's Works (G. Bell and Sons).

How he þi suavit was morden more
And hit his loue floure and fructifie

Al yoth his life be queynt þe resemblance
Of him say in me so fressh lyffynesse
þat to pinte othir men in remembrance
Of his pson þi haue heere his lyfynesse
Do make to þis ende in oostfastnesse
þat þei þi haue of him lest youghst i mynde
By þi penitence may nygyn him fynde

The ymages þi in þi churche been
Whiche folk yemke on god & on his seyntes
Whan þe ymages þei be holden i seyn
Were oft wysre of hem carysch resteyntes
Of youghstes gode Whan a ying depeynt is
Di cirtules if men take of it heere
Thoght of þe lyfynesse it wil in hym brede

If yt come holden oppryon and dey
þat none ymages schuld i make be
þei eren foule & goon out of þe wey
Of trouth haue þei stant senfibilite
Passi oð þi noch blessid tennite
Vpon my ministres soule indy haue
þor him lacy etc þi indy i create

More othir ying wolde i fyne speke & touche
Heere in me booke bit othynch is my dylnesse
þor þal word and empte is my pouthe
þat al my lyf is querent þi heynnesse
And heyn spytte comendeth stilesse



apparently the only genuine portrait in existence. The figure, which is half-length, has a background of green tapestry. He is represented with grey hair and beard, which is bi-forked [like that of his own Marchaunt]; he wears a dark-coloured dress and hood, his right hand is extended, and in his left he holds a string of beads. From his vest a black case is suspended, which appears to contain a knife, or possibly 'a penner,'* or pencase. The expression of the countenance is intelligent; but the fire of the eye seems quenched, and evident marks of advanced age appear on the countenance. This is incomparably the best portrait of Chaucer yet discovered."

As to this description, Nicolas is justifiably contradicted by Professor A. Ward,† and by Mr. Thomas R. Lounsbury in his elaborate work upon the poet.‡ Since Nicolas wrote, the discussion as to Chaucer's age has arisen, and perhaps a different view of the portrait has followed the readjustment of dates. Professor Ward concedes the greyness of hair and beard, but very properly "denies that this fact could be taken of itself to contradict the supposition that he died about the age of sixty."

It will, of course, be observed that the extended right hand is pointing out of the picture towards the text which describes the portrait, an arrangement more ingenious than artistic.

Dr. Furnivall, the head of the Chaucer Society, emphatically declares that "Hoccleve's portrait of Chaucer is surely one of a man not above sixty. He doubtless had his master painted as he saw him shortly before his death."§ With this view most persons now agree. I may add that Dr. Furnivall tells me he regards as trustworthy no other existing portrait.

As to this limning, one critic has declared that Chaucer's "disciple Hoccleve caused a picture of him to be painted at the beginning of a manuscript of his book 'De Regimine Principis,' which he presented to Henry V." As the writer proceeds to say that "*under* the drawing he inscribed the following stanza," we might hesitate to accept without question the argument of so inaccurate an observer. Yet it can hardly be doubted, as I have already hinted, that the expression "I have here his likeness do make" is intended as a disclaimer of original authorship.

Compare—

"Prively a penner gan he borwe,
And in a lettre wrote he all his sorwe."—'Marchaunt's Tale,' l. 9753.

† "English Men of Letters" Series.

‡ 'Studies in Chaucer' (Harper and Brothers).

§ "Date of Chaucer's Birth," by Dr. F. J. Furnivall, 'Notes and Queries,' 4th s., vii, May 13th, 1871, p. 412.—M. H. S.

As already explained, Hoccleve may well have employed a Westminster or other painter or monk who had often seen Chaucer. The painting is not a fancy one.—F. J. F.

George Vertue maintains the tradition of genuineness on his principal print of Chaucer, which was No. 2 (John Gower being No. 1, and Edmund Spenser No. 3) in the set executed within ornamental borders with Lord Oxford's arms. Vertue, it may here be stated, engraved another "Geofry Chaucer," large, in an oval frame, as well as a third, smaller, with the verses in old character. Referring to the Hoccleve drawing, Walpole reminds us that "Urry and Tanner both mention such a portrait, which places Hoccleve in the rank of one of our first painters as well as poets."*

Copies of the Hoccleve portrait are to be found in one or two of the poet's MSS., and one of them is engraved to illustrate Tyrwhitt's edition of 'The Canterbury Tales.' It should here be mentioned that J. Thomson engraved, "from a limning in Hoccleve's Poems in the British Museum," a portrait on steel "under the superintendence of the Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge," and it was issued in the third volume of 'The Gallery of Portraits, with Memoirs,' published by C. Knight, 22, Ludgate Hill, 1834, and republished in 1853 by W. S. Orr. The engraving shows a man of about seventy years, with a nose inclined to be aquiline, and with white hair. The face is in stipple.

Houbraken and George Vertue both engraved a plate after the Hoccleve portrait. Each man worked for Knapton; the former was the finer artist, the latter the more conscientious. "Some of Houbraken's heads," says Walpole, "were carelessly done, especially of the moderns; but Vertue had a fault to dealers which was a merit to the public: his scrupulous veracity could not digest imaginary portraits, as some of those engraved by Houbraken. . . . Vertue was *incommode*; he loved truth." The undertaking referred to was entitled 'Heads of Illustrious Persons of Great Britain,' with lines by Dr. Birch, and it was completed in 1752.

Houbraken's plate shows a man about fifty years of age, with whiskers, moustache, and beard, looking to the right, being, doubtless, not first reversed by the careless artist when engraving on the copper direct from the painting. The face is somewhat wrinkled, and the nose is straight with a well-defined bridge and an end inclined to be bulbous. S. Freeman engraved the same portrait, and his plate was published by Archibald Fullarton and Co., of Glasgow, in Cunningham's 'Lives of Eminent Englishmen,' 1836. A third plate, in which a column, a curtain, and a church, with a landscape background, were added—much in the manner of the Clarendon portrait—was issued by Darton, of

* Walpole's 'Anecdotes of Painting,' vol. i, p. 31.

Although his life querte be. the resemblance
 Of hym. hath in me so fressh likeness
 That to prynces other men. in remembrance
 Of his pson. I haue here the likeness
 So nate. to this ende in so thefastness
 That they that haue of hym. lost thought and mynde
 In this peritue. may agayn hym fynde

The ymages that in the churches ben
 maken folk thynke on god and on his seyntes
 Whan they the ymages beholden and seen
 So her as vnsight of hem causeth resternes
 Of thoughtes goode. Whan a thing depernt is
 Or entailed. of men taken of it hede
 A thought of the likeness. it dole in hem buede.

That com holden oppon and sey
 That none ymages. shuld ymaged be
 To my erren soule. and gone out of the day
 Of trouthe. Whan they stant confusible
 Passe ouer nede. that blisshed temite
 Upon my maystres soule. merry hitne
 For hym lady. eke. thy mercy I ceue

For other thing I dole. I fayne speke and touche
 Here in this booke. but ouer is my dylness
 For that all wide. and empty is my pouche
 That all my herte. is querte with heuynesse
 An hegy spente. contumelous felness
 And harte I spoke of pees. I shal be stille
 God sende us pees. if it be his wille



Holborn Hill; but the likeness had degenerated into a caricature. Other subsequent versions exist to which it is needless to refer.

George Vertue's plate, with Occleve's lines beneath, was published in 'Ancient British Portraits,' issued or reissued by Boydell in 1812. It also shows, curiously enough, a small whisker; the figure is a quarter-length, without hands, and is inserted in a bad architectural border, and inscribed "Ad exemplar Thomæ Occleve in libro suo, DE REGIMINE PRINCIPIS; Walliæ Principis (postea Hen. V) inscripto." "Ectypum hoc alim dum in vivis destinatum nunc τὰ μακαρίη a memoriæ consecratum esse volui. G. Vertue." It need only be added that the Roxburghe Club issued the Occleve poem in 1860; and that the whisker, so far as the Occleve portraits are concerned, is without authority.

II.—In a copy of Occleve's poems in the Royal MS. 17, D vi, F 90b, in the British Museum (Department of Manuscripts), is a full-length portrait, which in Nicolas's opinion is very early, if not actually contemporaneous with Occleve himself. I doubt, however, if Nicolas ever examined this portrait with his own eyes. In his description he says: "He appears very old, with grey hair and beard: he holds a string of beads in his left hand, and his right arm is extended as if speaking earnestly. His vest, hood, stockings, and pointed boots are all black. Over the figure is written, in the same hand as the poems, 'Chaucers ymage.'"

Now the reader can satisfy himself from the reproduction here, p. 9, that the string of beads is held in the *right* hand, and that the left arm is *not* "extended" (as is the case in MS. 4866—the original Occleve); and, indeed, that the whole figure faces to the right. Moreover the poet is not supposed to be "speaking earnestly," but is simply pointing to the words "By this peynture."

But what will further be noticed is this: that Nicolas makes no reference to the variations in the text, which appears to me of a date much later than that to which he is inclined to attribute it; that the execution is in all respects less competent and serious than in the original—features and details being alike ill-drawn by comparison; while the number of twenty-three or twenty-four beads (more resembling counters) in the rosary is probably nearer truth than the ten large balls in the portrait first described. Above all, I would direct attention to the strange drawing of the feet. The left foot is not more uncouth in shape than the character of the boot and the draughtsmanship of the period would explain; but the toes of the right foot turn up curiously. This might not be regarded as a noteworthy circumstance were it not for the

fact—not hitherto recognised, so far as I am aware—that other full-length portraits invite attention to a similar peculiarity. I come back to this



III. FROM THE ADDITIONAL MS. 5141, BRIT. MUS.

point later when discussing the picture at the National Portrait Gallery, comparing it with others similarly suggestive; but I would hazard the theory that it was this short-leggedness which inspired the artist of the Ellesmere MS. to show on horseback a bigly made man with the leg of a dwarf.

III.—A portrait pleasing in arrangement, but lacking in character, is the small full-length which is best known to the reading public through the coloured illustration (rather too brightly illuminated in lithography) which is reproduced in 'Dresses and Decorations of the Middle Ages,' by Henry Shaw, F.S.A.* This portrait, which is on vellum, together "with an account of Chaucer in a modern hand," says Sir Harris Nicolas, "is in the Additional MS. 5141 in the British Museum, and has lately been engraved [by Shaw]. It is a full-length, and in one corner is the date 1402, and in another corner a daisy; but it has no pretensions to the genuineness of Occleve's painting in the Harleian MS. 4866, and is perhaps not older than the reign of Queen Elizabeth."

The portrait, ill enough drawn, and, I take it, quite as recent as Elizabeth's reign, shows a man "looking on the ground" (see p. 6) in a brown-grey hood and frock, black hose, and shoes edged with red. A red tassel hangs from the rosary, and a red top decorates the inkhorn or penner. The beard is bi-forked, and the poet has the appearance of being about forty years of age. The purple daisy, Chaucer's favourite flower, seems to be the *Bellis perennis*; and the figures in which the date is written probably belong to late in the sixteenth century. It will be observed, by reference to the date and the daisy, that Nicolas is once more loose in his description of the relative position of the accessories.

George Vertue engraved a three-quarter length from the standing figure, but the likeness is a very poor one. The plate was used as a frontispiece to 'The Canterbury Tales.' It may be recorded that an excellent water-colour copy of this drawing, made by Mr. Smith, at one time Keeper of the Prints at the British Museum, is now (1900) in the large collection of Johnsoniana belonging to Mr. A. H. Hallam Murray.

IV.—In an initial letter in the Lansdowne MS. 851, on folio 2, is a third portrait, small full-length, in a copy of 'The Canterbury Tales,' which was made in the reign of Henry V—or less than fifty years after Chaucer's death. "He is dressed in a long grey gown," says Nicolas, "with red stockings, and black shoes fastened with black sandals round the ankles. His head is bare, and the hair closely cut. In his right

hand he holds an open book, and a knife or pence, as in the other portraits, is attached to his vest."

Again it will be seen that the description by Nicolas, who is usually respected as a close observer, is incorrect. The book is held in both

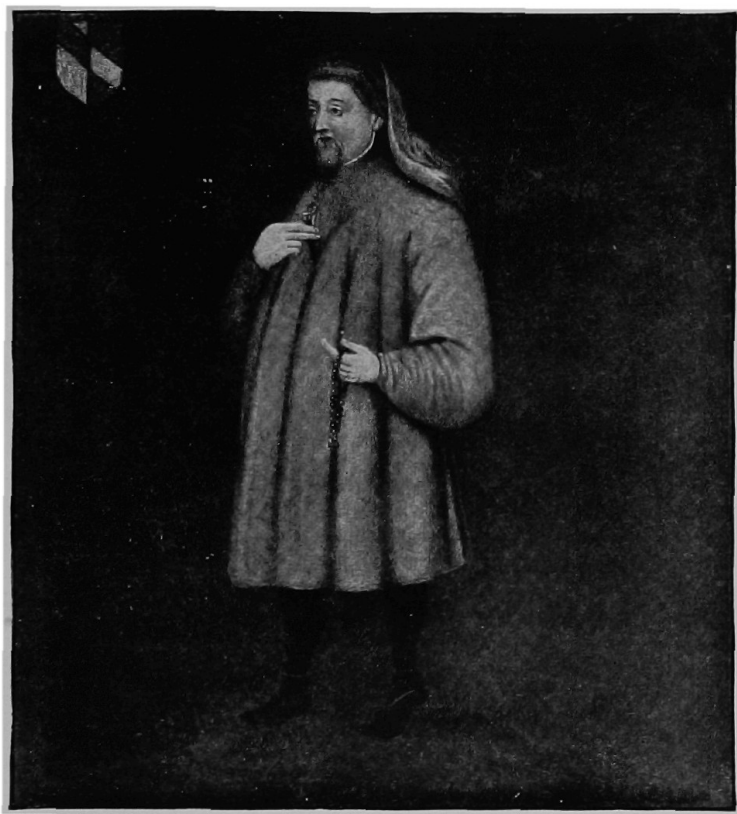


IV. FROM THE LANSDOWNE MS. 851, LEAF 2, BRIT. MUS.

hands, chiefly the left. Although the MS. is undoubtedly an early one, the portrait, as such, is hardly worth serious consideration; indeed, Dr. Furnivall's contemptuous allusion to it as a "stupid peasant thing" is not unmerited.

* Two vols., Pickering, 1843.—M. H. S.

The same authority refers to a portrait now perished, which once existed in the Colton MS. Otho A. XVIII, but which was burned at the time of the destruction of that library by fire; as well as to the full-length portrait in the Harleian MS. 4826, which was cut out at or before the time of Queen Elizabeth, by some unhappy vandal—"summe furious



V. PORTRAIT IN THE NATIONAL PORTRAIT GALLERY (NO. 320 OF SIR HANS SLOANE'S COLLECTION).

foole"—against whom a sixteenth century rhymester launched a denunciation in doggerel verse which is applauded for its sentiment to this day.

V.—The standing portrait, now in the National Portrait Gallery, has obviously common origin with the "Additional 5141," already described; but it has important variations. Painted on stout oak panel $11\frac{3}{4}$ inches

high (sight measurement $10\frac{1}{2}$ inches high), the little full-length has much the same colour scheme—a greyish hood and garment, white edged at the neck, with black hose, and curiously designed black shoes edged with red round the top and about the instep. The hair is lightish brown. The penner is mounted with gold, and is slung from the fourth button with gold thread. It is to be noted that the beads seem to have been painted by a more skilful hand than that which wrought the rest; indeed, the brilliance of execution with which the objects are rendered is quite remarkable. A Maltese cross of gold is substituted for the tassel, and the glass beads themselves, contrary to other pictures, are in pairs, alternately red and black. It is very curious that this portrait (which measures $9\frac{7}{8}$ inches from toe to crown), even more than "Add. 5141" or "17 D. vi," shows a forced attitude of the left foot so marked as to make us doubt whether the distortion is merely an eccentricity of the draughtsman's incompetence, or whether the poet did not really walk upon the toes only of that foot through a stiffened ankle or congenital deformity or shortness of leg. It must be admitted, against this supposition, that there is no evidence of any such tradition having come down to Elizabethan times, the probable date of the panel. This portrait, numbered 320 of the Sir Hans Sloane collection, whence it came, was transferred from the British Museum in 1879. The face appears to be of a man younger by twenty years than that seen in the Occleve portrait; it is, moreover, much weaker in character than the latter or the Fairfax Murray picture. There is no note of its previous history.

VI.—The Bodleian portrait has made far more claim upon public attention than it can rightly command. It seems to have little enough interest for Sir Harris Nicolas, who passes it over with the statement that an engraving of it forms the frontispiece of Urry's edition of the poet's works, printed in 1721—that edition, by the way, which Tyrwhitt so vigorously assailed. "This, and others in the British Museum and at Knowle," says Sir Harris, "seem to have been all formed from Occleve's painting, long after his time."

This portrait was shown at "The First Special Exhibition of National Portraits" at the South Kensington Museum in 1866, and was thus described: "Three-quarter miniature, looking to r.,* white head-covering and dress; inscribed 'Chaucer, 1400'† Panel, 1 foot 2 inches × $10\frac{1}{2}$

* That is to say, the spectator's left.—M. H. S.

† This inscription is almost invisible in the excellent photograph which I have had taken of this portrait. It occurs on a level a little lower than the eye, and is in modern characters. There are indications of an inscription having formerly existed immediately below the shield.—M. H. S.

inches." It should have been added that beneath the white head-cloak or hood is a dark shadow, or (judged by the touches) hair, or, may be, a cap; that the face has a darkish beard, pointed rather than bifurcated, a shovel nose, somewhat protruding eyes, and a flat cheek—the whole presenting the appearance of a man of some forty years. The eyes are



VI. THE PORTRAIT IN THE BODLEIAN LIBRARY, OXFORD.

dark, whereas those in the Oocleve and the Fairfax Murray (or Seddon) portraits are distinctly light. The shield is in the top left-hand corner—properly described thus; Per pale argent and gules a bend counter-changed. The figuring beneath it is evidently late, intended apparently to record the date of the poet's death rather than that of the painting

of the picture. The shield has manifestly been retouched, and, it may be added, the present condition of the picture is very poor—the paint breaking away from the ground in many places. It is to be borne in mind that, in spite of the prestige supposed to belong to it—due chiefly to the dignity of its present home—no authority is to be attributed to this large "miniature."

VII.—It was, as far as I have been able to ascertain, so recently as in 1866 that the Fairfax Murray or Seddon portrait—as it must for convenience be named—was first exhibited to the public. It was lent by Mr. John P. Seddon, the well-known architect, and, like the last-named, was included in the first of the three annual loan exhibitions of national portraits at the South Kensington Museum. It was thus described in the catalogue:

"To waist, small life-size, face three quarters to r.;* dated 1400. Panel, 19 by 14.

"Stated to have been preserved for more than three centuries in the family of Stokes, of Llanshaw Court, Gloucester; given in 1803 to Benjamin Dyke."

This portrait, to which I have already alluded, was originally photographed by Mr. Hollyer, but, by the courteous permission of Mr. Fairfax Murray, the present owner, who has given me all help and information in his power, I have had it photographed again by Mr. Dixon, with the result of bringing out more details.

In its general arrangement this portrait closely resembles the Bodleian miniature; but it is considerably bigger, and the two halves of the bend sinister upon the shield, although clearly divided as in the other picture, do not contrast the colours so plainly. Although the panel is a larger one, it is smaller in relation to the figure, and, in fact, the face is far better drawn, much more lifelike, and bears a closer resemblance to the Oocleve portrait, on which one might suppose the arrangement of it to be founded, except as to the cap (or hair), the nose, and the pose of the right hand. Moreover the angle at which the face is seen is not the same. Here the hood, as well as the dress, is grey; the hair brown under the hood, and fair the beard, partly, perhaps, through having been somewhat cleaned away—reminding us distantly of Green's description of Chaucer's "silver haire both bright and sheen . . . his beard was white." The penner is attached by a scarlet thread, and the beads are arranged three black and one red alternately. Mr. Seddon, the former owner, has given me the following information as to its history.

* The spectator's left.—M. H. S.



VII. THE PORTRAIT NOW OWNED BY MR. FAIRFAX MURRAY (FORMERLY BY JN. P. SEDDON, GIVEN IN 1808 TO BENJ. DYKE: FROM THE FAMILY OF STOKES, OF LLANSHAW COURT, GLOUCESTER).

His brother, the late Thomas Seddon—the artist whose “Jerusalem and the Valley of Jehoshaphat” has lately been transferred from the National Gallery to the Tate Gallery at Millbank—died in 1856, leaving in the care of Messrs. Colnaghi a portrait of Chaucer in oil,* on an oak panel, for sale for the benefit of a nephew and niece of his wife, named Bulford, to whom it belonged. Mr. Seddon, on their behalf, offered the picture for sale to the National Portrait Gallery, but the Trustees proposed for it so small a sum, for the curious reason that “it did not look new enough,” that Sir George Scharf, the Director, declined to name it. It was put into a new frame, the old one having disappeared, and after the death of the owners was sold to Mr. Fairfax Murray. It measures $19\frac{1}{8}$ inches high by $15\frac{3}{8}$ inches wide (sight measurement, $18\frac{1}{2}$ inches by $14\frac{1}{2}$ inches), and bears on the back an inscription, always faint, and now almost hopelessly illegible, to this effect:

“This picture was presented by Miss Frances Lambert† to Benjamin Dyke on the 6th September, 1803, to perpetuate the memory of her late invaluable relation, Thomas Stokes, Esq., of Llanshaw Court, in the county of Gloucester, where it was preserved for more than three centuries, as appears from the inventory of pictures in the possession of that ancient and respectable family. The date under the arms was the period when the venerable Chaucer died, aged seventy-two.‡ The wood is of oak, and has nearly or will wear out the paint [*sic*]. The frame has been repaired with much difficulty. The picture is to the possessor invaluable, owing to the purity of friendship which existed between the living and the dead. Reader, may thy friendship with whosoever it may be formed be as sincere, and may no rude or careless hand destroy this ancient relick. Time perhaps may perish it when thou and I are lost.”

“Mr. Holman Hunt,” says Mr. Seddon, “told me, when he had carefully examined the picture, that it puzzled him much, because, not being by a highly skilled painter, it had so many delicate touches about the eyes and nostrils, etc., that such a painter could hardly have produced it except from life.” When compared with the smaller picture from the Bodleian (exhibited on the same occasion) Mr. Seddon’s picture was generally considered to be the superior work. As to the Bulfords, it may be mentioned that Mr. Seddon’s sister-in-law was a Mrs. Edmund

Bulford, but here all further trace is lost. It has ignorantly been suggested that this picture may be the original of that now, or formerly, in the British Museum, whither, in 1879, the picture in the National Portrait Gallery was transferred; but it is quite clear that the critic never compared the style of the two works. Apart from the colour of the hair, the sitter appears to be a man of about forty years of age.

The similarity in attitude and arrangement, and in a far less degree in feature, between this picture and that in the Bodleian is unmistakable. But, as I have remarked, the portrait is infinitely more convincing as a work from life. It should be said that the resemblance to the head and bust of the Sloane portrait is still more striking as to the features. It may fairly be deduced that all three are based on the Add. MS. 5141 in the British Museum, and that, no doubt, was painted from the Occleve (Harleian, 4866).

Now it should be observed that, judging from Sir Harris Nicolas’s reference to “an original portrait” mentioned by both Urry and Grainger, we may possibly find ourselves upon the track of the Fairfax Murray (or Seddon) portrait. It “was said to be in the possession of George Greenwood, of Chasleton, in Gloucestershire.” Chasleton is not far from Llanshaw Court. Moreover the writer adds that it was “taken when he was about thirty years old;” so that there is some presumptive evidence here, for the colour of the hair is brown. In any case the Fairfax Murray portrait bears a closer resemblance to the Occleve Chaucer than the Bodleian can claim to do; and, ill drawn though it is in the region of the shoulder, the first-named is probably the original of the last. On the other hand, it is not possible to claim for it any positive authority, in spite of its evident antiquity and its claim to a measure of respect.

VIII.—Among the most characteristic portraits of Chaucer is the equestrian miniature, representing the poet as he is supposed to speak of himself as on horseback journeying with the pilgrims to Canterbury. This “is preserved in a MS. of his poems belonging to the Marquis of Stafford, which has been engraved in ‘Todd’s Illustrations of Gower and Chaucer,’ 8vo, 1810.”* This portrait, when it came into the possession of Lord Francis of Egerton, was declared by another critic to be good as to the face, but the body as remarkably ill-proportioned. “The resemblance which these different portraits bear to each other leaves no room to doubt that the likeness is correct.” The horse is white, and the harness black. “His figure,” says Sir Harris Nicolas, “is small, short, and rather stout: he wears a long dark-coloured dress and hood, with a

* If it is really in oil, as it certainly appears to be, thinly applied, the date is presumably a later addition. Pictures at that date were more commonly painted in tempera.—M. H. S.

† Or “Lambert.”

‡ This was written, of course, before more recent research caused a readjustment of dates and, consequently, of the poet’s years.—M. H. S.

* See Rev. James Dallaway’s Notes.—M. H. S.

girdle, and a purse or gipciere, and he is booted and spurred." This, known as the Ellesmere portrait, from its being in the MS. belonging to the Earl of Ellesmere, is the only extra portrait (so-called) which Dr. Furnivall issued for the Chaucer Society. As the Doctor characteristically writes to me, "It has as much authority as the Bodleian or Fairfax



VIII. FROM THE ELLESMERE MS., LEAF 157, BACK.

Murray portraits—that is, none at all; but is not so ridiculous as the stupid peasant thing in another British Museum MS.* But I think the Ellesmere one represents a man of Chaucer's type and class on horseback, and is worth reproducing. Mr. W. Hooper, 5, Hammersmith Terrace, has the copy he made from the MS."

* That is to say, the Lansdowne MS. 851. Cf. *supra*.—M. H. S.

Mr. W. H. Hooper, the well-known engraver, tells me: "It is many years since I did the work, which was wrought under difficulties—a bad light for one; but I did my best to make it accurate as far as its condition permitted. My instructions were to make the drawing good in such places as time and handling had damaged the work. All the figures are drawn on the margin, so they have suffered the more; the red used was a lead preparation, which had changed to a metallic black, and other colours had turned because of the white used for body being also a lead colour. Dr. Furnivall had photographs taken some years afterwards, which were to be printed in colour; but a fire occurred which destroyed the printer's shop, so nothing came of it."

I may add that the negative here referred to is now lost—last heard of it was in the possession of Mr. Prætorius,—but not before a collotype illustration was made from it. I am therefore the more pleased that by the courtesy of the Earl of Ellesmere and his trustees I am enabled here to set before the reader an excellent reproduction of this interesting and important limning. This representation is obviously far more truthful than the wood engraving which Mr. Hooper made of it for the Chaucer Society; not because that skilful engraver was unable to approach in his block more closely to the original, but because it was cut for hand colouring, and not for printing in black and white, a form in which, nevertheless, it was presented to the world. Mr. Hooper cut on wood the whole of the drawings of twenty-three letters to the twenty-four 'Canterbury Tales' in 1871. The painting in the Ellesmere MS. is on leaf 157, back, and occurs on the left-hand of the page opposite the following lines:

PORTRAIT
OF
CHAUCER
HERE.

heere bigynneth Chaucers tale of Melibee

A yong man called Melibeus myghty and riche

It will thus be seen that there is no lack of so-called portraits of Chaucer; copies, and copies of copies, sufficiently alike to confuse the student, yet without difference enough to invest them with the highest historical interest. The majority are at bottom so many acts of reverence to the poet, called forth by the simple desire to have his features reproduced from sheer love of him. Such was "the painted effigies of Chaucer," in full length, of which Walpole speaks—that which "remained within these few years* on his tomb at Westminster,"—a portrait, says

* Circa 1750.

Dallaway, which "was copied from some unknown miniature of him, when Nicolas Brigham erected a monument to his memory in Westminster Abbey in 1550,* as the inscription proves, at which time it was painted against the wall. No trace is now visible." And such, too, was Chaucer's statue which the Royal Commission determined (in 1845) to erect in the House of Parliament at Westminster, to the surprise of all practical-minded people. One of these, Percival Leigh, put the general feeling into rhyme in 'Punch,' when he proposed the following inscription should be carved on the statue's base in what he considered good Chaucerian verse *pour rire*:

"Good Sirs, I marvel what we herè maken,
Gretè folk, certès, be sometimes mistaken,
We standen in this stound by much errour,
Ne poet was in Parlement before;
We are fysh out of water, verily,
I do not brethè well this air, perdy.
In the Abbaye we weren well enoughe;
To put us here in Parlement is stuffe."

James Elmes, M.R.I.A.,† after foolishly describing the Occleve portrait as "a mere pen-and-ink sketch," proceeds: "About 1802 an early painting of Chaucer, believed to be coeval with his time, was found by Sir Richard Phillips in a lumber garret of the house at Huntingdon in which Oliver Cromwell was born. It is on panel, about three feet six inches by two feet six inches, in the flat and unrelieved style of the early painters, but accompanied by all those minutæ of still life which characterise their works. The physiognomy is similar to that by Occleve, and the complexion, the hair, and the costume accord with Occleve's description of the poet. Coin lies scattered upon the table, indicative of his employment in the Customs, and he carries the white wand of office in his hand. On a chest is spiritedly sketched his 'Knight's Tale,' and in the background, in legible characters, stands the word *Chaucer*. If painted in the reign of Richard II, of which there appears little doubt, it is perhaps the oldest picture in England, and almost the oldest portrait in Europe. Its discovery and acquisition led Sir Richard Phillips to make it the basis of a gallery of original portraits of English poets and men of letters." I have been unable to trace this remarkable work; and I may add that I am hardly convinced of its existence, or, at least, of its genuineness.

IX.—Apocryphal and mythical portraits are hardly less perplexing than those which apparently are lost. Among these has been reckoned

* The correct date is 1556 —M. H. S.

† 'The Arts and Artists,' vol. iii, p. 70. London: Knight and Lacey, 1825.

the supposed medal or medallion to which John Evelyn has been thought by some to refer in his letter of the 12th August, 1689, written from Sayes Court to Mr. Samuel Pepys. Discussing the collecting of portraits in a long argument full of intelligence and understanding, he says: "At present I know of none who can show a better chosen set of Medals than the Earle of Clarendon"—that is to say, the second Earl (Lord Cornbury), whose father, the Lord Chancellor, conceived the "purpose to furnish all roomes of state and other apartments with the Pictures of our most Illustrious of our Nation, especially of his Lordship's time and acquaintance, and of diuers before it." After enumerating a long list of portraits, he adds, "And what was most agreeable to his Lordship's general humour, Old Chaucer, Shakspeare, Beaumont and Fletcher, who were both in one piece."

If the work here mentioned could have reference to a medal at all—the word "picture" being an elastic term with some—such a work is not to be found. The present Earl of Clarendon (to whom, for the sake of accuracy and completeness, I applied) knows nothing of it; nor, moreover, is there any trace of it or of any other Chaucer medal in the British Museum. This is not surprising, for it will be remembered that Chaucer lived at a time far anterior to that at which the art of the medallist was introduced into England; indeed, the earliest contemporary portrait-medal of an Englishman is that of John Kendal, executed in 1450. Evelyn adds that most of the portraits he mentions, "if not all, are at the present at Cornebery in Oxfordshire." Now when Cornbury's owner sold the estate to George Duke of Marlborough, the great-grandfather of the present Lord Spencer-Churchill, the pictures were removed, as is stated later.

As a matter of fact, John Evelyn did not refer to a medal at all, but to the picture which Lady Theresa Lewis, in her 'Lives of the Friends and Contemporaries of Lord Chancellor Clarendon,' declares to have been removed to Bothwell Castle. This picture still hangs upon the walls of the castle, and by the kindness of the owner, the Earl of Home, and with the consent of the lessee, Sir James King, Bt., I have been enabled to have it photographed and here placed before the reader—the first time, I believe, that the work has ever been reproduced. Lord Home reminds me that "the picture came into the possession of the family with the rest of the collection at Bothwell Castle, which consists of half the Chancellor Clarendon's collection left to the family by the Duke of Queensberry and Dover." That is to say, that one half of that collection is at Bothwell Castle, and the other at The Grove, Watford.



IX. THE CLARENDON PORTRAIT OF CHAUCER, AT BOTHWELL CASTLE.

The picture is on canvas, four feet two inches by three feet four inches (presumably sight measure). The eyes are a darkish grey, the hair reddish, fair to light brown. The sleeved garment is grey, and the head is surmounted by a square drapery of the same colour. Three parts of the background consist of a column and dark brown wall, and to the left is a landscape. On the column hangs the small shield—party per pale arg. and gu., a bend counterchanged. "The picture," continues Mr. T. E. King, who courteously sent me these particulars, "is clean and fresh. There is a good deal of character in the face, which is deeply lined, especially about the corners of the mouth."

This portrait, it will be seen, is based originally upon the Occleve limning, or upon a copy of it, while the seventeenth century landscape background and general Flemish manner betray it. At the same time it resembles more closely the Seddon or Fairfax Murray portrait than any other. From what we know of the custom of the time—and confirmed in the belief by the nature of Evelyn's own testimony—we may take it that the first Earl Clarendon, desiring to have portraits of our great men for his room, adopted the simple expedient of having them painted for him, instructing the artist to depend not entirely on his own inspiration, but to go to such authority as he could find.

It will be noticed that the beads of the rosary are red and black, but not in couples—they are arranged alternately. Thirty-one beads are visible; a cross of gold hangs from a clasp of the same metal, and two other clasps at the sides break the series.

X.—Another portrait contained in the Bodleian Library is here reproduced, more for completeness' sake than from the belief that any sort of historic interest belongs to it. This is the pastel portrait founded, very infelicitously, on the Occleve portrait. The evident attempt to beautify the face, to refine the somewhat aquiline nose of the original, to clear-cut its tip and idealise its nostril, to diminish the size of the ear while transferring it to a somewhat more appropriate place than that where Occleve put it, to raise the lips in a smile instead of depressing the corners as in the original, to curl the hair, and give a dashing twist to the moustache and a flow to the little beard, to accentuate the eyes (yet only succeeding in making them squint), and generally to smarten up the poet and show him as something of a dandy—robbing him at once of his dignity and of his simplicity of dress, and endowing him with fal-lal embroideries,—this is the work of a fairly skilful but unsympathetic draughtsman, wholly ignorant of Chaucer's temperament, intellect, or personality. Yet the picture, modern as it appears, has been a

good while in the Library, the records of which set forth that this portrait, "in crayons," was bequeathed by Dr. Richard Rawlinson in 1755. It is almost certainly an eighteenth century work, and interesting as a pastel.



X. THE PASTEL PORTRAIT OF CHAUCER IN THE BODLEIAN LIBRARY, OXFORD.

We thus have ten principal portraits (but of very unequal interest and value) which are dealt with here, and these, for the sake of convenience, I re-enumerate.

1. Occleve, Harleian MS. 4866.	British Museum	Half length.
2. Occleve, Royal MS. 17 D. vi	British Museum	Full length.
3. Add. MS. 5141	British Museum	Full length.
4. Lansdowne MS. 851	British Museum	Full length.
5. Sloane Collection	National Portrait Gallery	Full length.
6. Bodleian	Bodleian Library	Half length.
7. Seddon or Fairfax Murray	Mr. Fairfax Murray	Half length.
8. Ellesmere MS. (Equestrian)	Bridgewater House	Full length.
9. Clarendon	Bothwell Castle	Half length.
10. Rawlinson pastel	Bodleian Library	Quarter length.

If we would classify these portraits in any way, we should probably have to resort to the minor expedient of dividing them into the two variants in design,—those which represent the poet as pointing forward with the index finger, as the two Occleve and the Ellesmere portraits; and those which show him fingering his penner, as in the Add. 5141 portrait, the Sloane, the Bodleian, and the Fairfax Murray portraits. It would be more satisfactory, perhaps, from the physiognomical point of view, could we separate those which attribute to Chaucer an aquiline nose from those which suggest a bulbous one. But seeing that there is only one portrait which we need freely accept, we can afford to regard the matter as of little relative importance, especially as all early portraitists have agreed in this—that the face as well as the bearing of Chaucer was full of quiet dignity and simple modesty, and that, whether painted work or engraving, nearly all representations succeed in impressing the spectator with these leading characteristics. Much the same may be said of the frontispiece portraits to the collected editions of his works. It will be remembered that the 1532 edition and the two Stowe editions of 1542 and 1561 had no portrait; but Speght's folio of 1598 was so decorated, and nearly every important edition since that date has been provided

with a plate better or less well executed. When ill done they do not always claim the application of Macaulay's consolatory criticism, that the best portraits are those in which there is a slight mixture of caricature. What, indeed, would we not give to see the Master in just one photograph—the equivalent, or at least the substitute, of the mirror which Menzel declared to be better than a whole gallery of portraits? That we have, as it is, so extensive a gallery of Chaucer portraits seems the more remarkable the more we study the history and practice of portrait-painting in Chaucer's time and onwards; and we can only conclude that the appreciation of his day was more acute than later on, when, if Dryden speak the truth, Cowley told the Earl of Leicester that Chaucer was a dry, old-fashioned wit, not worth reviving, and that he had no taste of him.*

There is no need to offer explanation for the interest which consideration of the features and the person of the poet must arouse in the mind of every one of his readers, or excuses for the enthusiasm with which an inquirer into the subject must prosecute his researches. It is only the conviction that the Occleve portrait (Harleian 4866) is the sole authentic picture that has prevented Professor Skeat and Dr. Furnivall—the leaders of modern Chaucerian students—from dealing with the whole subject at length: but a humbler inquirer may well feel justified in going over the old ground, seeking whether anything new may not be discovered by the re-turning of old stones, more particularly when he approaches the subject less from the literary and historical side than from that of art and physiognomy.

* Southey's 'Common-place Book,' vol. iv, p. 323.—M. H. S.